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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Letter dated 17 October 1994 from the Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to refer to the letter dated 13 October 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to Your Excellency regarding the abduction of an Israeli soldier, in which he states the following:

> "According to intelligence sources, Corporal Waxman is being held captive in the Gaza Strip. In accordance with the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and with the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area signed by the parties, the responsibility for the life, welfare and safe return of Corporal Waxman lies with the Palestinian Authority" (A/49/510-S/1994/1158).

Prior to that letter, the Israeli Government suspended the peace talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization and, in what amounted to collective punishment, sealed the entire Gaza Strip. Several high-level Israeli officials repeatedly announced that they held the Palestinian Authority responsible for the life of the soldier, and even insisted that the head of the Palestinian

Authority was personally responsible. Such positions were echoed by some others as well. Furthermore, earlier in the week, following the attack which took place in Jerusalem on 9 October 1994, some high-level Israeli officials propagated the rumour that one of the attackers in the incident was a member of the Palestinian police force, even at the time when the facts were known that the person was not a Palestinian and was holding an Israeli visa.

Shortly after the abduction of the soldier, the Palestinian Authority did condemn the abduction and maintained that the suspension of the talks was not appropriate and that the soldier, according to their information, was not in Gaza. The Authority, nevertheless, did its utmost to deal with the situation in the territories under its control. On 14 October 1994, an Israeli attempt to rescue the soldier took place, and it became known that the soldier was being held in Beir Nabala in the Occupied West Bank, which is still under Israeli control, and all Israeli assertions mentioned above proved to be wrong.

It was difficult to understand some of the Israeli positions, but it remains our strong hope that such positions do not suggest any negative motives towards the peace process at its present critical juncture. In any case, we believe that the integrity of the peace process should not have been endangered by hastily made positions and decisions. At this time, however, we would like also to express our satisfaction that the two parties have decided to resume the peace talks in Cairo this week.

The Palestine Liberation Organization reaffirms its condemnation of the abduction of the Israeli soldier. It reaffirms as well its condemnation of terrorist actions committed by Israelis, especially those committed by the illegally present Israeli settlers, against the Palestinian people.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 38, 40, 78 and 142.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations